

Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 04983 041841Z

61

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 SP-02 STR-04 TRSE-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 AGR-05 NSC-05 SS-15 TAR-01

L-03 /079 W

----- 049266

R 041738Z JUN 75

FM USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8982

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 719

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE EC BRUSSELS 4983

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN, EEC

SUBJECT: DUTCH PROPOSAL TO REFORM EC FINANCE COUNCIL MEETINGS

REF: EC BRUSSELS 4519

1. SUMMARY: DUTCH FINANCE MINISTER DUISENBERG WANTS TO REDUCE THE FREQUENCY AND TO IMPROVE THE PREPARATION OF EC FINANCE COUNCIL MEETINGS. PERM DELS AND THE COMMISSION AGREE THAT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT. THESE SUGGESTIONS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT LIKELY TO TACKLE THE FUNDAMENTAL SHORT-COMINGS OF THE COUNCIL. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE MAY 20 FINANCE COUNCIL MEETING, DUTCH FINANCE MINISTER DUISENBERG COMPLAINED THAT THE COUNCIL MEETINGS WERE NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARED AND THAT THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATIONS. THE COUNCIL'S ADVISORY COMMITTEES WERE ALSO FAILING TO KEEP COREPER INFORMED OF THEIR ACTIVITIES. DUISENBERG ADDED THAT THE MINISTERS' INFORMAL LUNCHEON SHOULD NOT SUPPLANT THE COUNCIL'S DECISION MAKING RESPONSIBILITY. WHILE HE FAVORS

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PAGE 02 EC BRU 04983 041841Z

CONTINUING THE MONTHLY LUNCHEONS, DUISENBERG WANTS TO

REDUCE THE FREQUENCY OF THE COUNCIL'S MEETING AND TO INCLUDE THE CHAIRMAN OF COREPER IN THE LUNCHEONS. DUISENBERG IS INCORPORATING HIS VIEWS IN A MEMORANDUM WHICH THE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER AT ONE OF ITS NEXT MEETINGS.

3. PERM DEL SOURCES GENERALLY SUPPORT THE DUTCH PROPOSALS. THEY INDICATE THAT SEVERAL OF THE RECENT MEETINGS HAVE BEEN FARCES AND ALL THE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN AT LUNCH. PERM DEL OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE LUNCHEONS ARE USEFUL BECAUSE THEY PROMOTE AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND INFORMALITY THAT ARE NECESSARY TO COORDINATE EC FINANCIAL POLICY. THE LUNCHEONS COULD BE HELD, HOWEVER, AT THE CONVENIENCE OF THE MINISTERS AT A TIME WHEN THEY ARE MEETING IN SOME OTHER FORUM. COMMISSION OFFICIALS ALSO AGREE THAT MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETINGS DO NOT ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ADEQUATE PREPARATION.

4. COMMENT: COREPER MAY HAVE THE MANDATE TO PREPARE THE COUNCIL MEETINGS BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO OVERCOME THE RELUCTANCE OF THE FINANCE MINISTRIES AND CENTRAL BANKS TO HAVE THE COREPER DELVE DEEPLY INTO THEIR AFFAIRS. THESE COMPLAINTS REFLECT CONCERN OVER THE INABILITY OF THE FINANCE MINISTERS TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE BASIC FINANCIAL ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY. THE REAL ISSUE IS HOW TO ENCOURAGE THE MEMBER STATES TO TACKLE THE VITAL ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY. PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS DO NOT COME TO GRIPS WITH THIS FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE. END COMMENT. GREENWALD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMITTEE MEETINGS, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ECBRU04983
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750195-0967
From: EC BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750679/aaaactrj.tel
Line Count: 91
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 EC BRUSSELS 4519
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <22 DEC 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DUTCH PROPOSAL TO REFORM EC FINANCE COUNCIL MEETINGS
TAGS: EFIN, NL, EEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006